

It Started With A Rose

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Summary:

One Valentine's Day Eddie gets a rose from a not so secret admirer. What Eddie didn't know was that rose would change his life forever.

Valentine's Day through the years.

It Started With A Rose

Eddie was thirteen when he received his first rose. It was February 14th, the day of love. The school was decorated with hearts. The afternoon sun reflected off the floating hearts. Pink and red colors danced on the walls. The people of Derry liked to celebrate every holiday with as much enthusiasm as the one before it. Stores were selling heart-shaped chocolates and roses were seen at every shop. Eddie was not a big fan of roses, well, flowers in general. His mother made him believe he was allergic to them. For years he kept hand sanitizer in his fanny pack whenever he came in contact with flowers. After that fateful summer, he began to rethink the things his mother told him. Yet, he still carried it around with him just in case.

Even with the excitement of the holiday, it felt like a normal day to Eddie. Beverly gave all the losers their own chocolates, much to the displeasure of Bill and Ben. Richie thanked her with a kiss on the cheek, while Eddie gave her a hug. Other than Bev, no one else gave Eddie chocolates or flowers. He did not really mind. He was thirteen so he didn't expect to get much. Class continued like normal until his third period. One of the students came in with a basket of roses. The roses were a deep red and looked freshly cut. Every year people could purchase roses to send to other students. Many girls received them and would look around the room at which girl had the most. Eddie wasn't paying attention as they began hanging them out until someone stood in front of his desk.

"For you." The girl smiled down at Eddie and for a second his heart dropped at the thought of her giving him one. He soon realized his mistake since she was handing them out to others as well. Eddie looked up at the girl confused.

"Are you sure?" The girl said nothing and placed the rose on the desk before moving on to the next person. Eddie examined the rose in front of him. The thorns were cut, leaving no chance of being pricked. A small note was attached to the rose, connected by a pink ribbon. Eddie looked around the room before opening the note. He had no clue why this rose would be addressed to him. He felt nervous as he opened the note. However, his excitement died as quickly as it

started.

“Roses are red
Violets are Blue
I fucked your mom
And I ain’t sorry too”

The bell rang letting students know the class was over. He knew exactly who would send such a dumb ass note.

“Are you fucking kidding me Trashmouth?” Eddie came up to Richie’s locker, smoke coming out of his ears. To say he was angry would be an understatement. He was furious. The rest of his friends began to appear to watch what would happen. Richie looked down at Eddie with a big grin on his face.

“You didn’t like my poetry Eds? It was really meant for your mom. Could you give it to her when you get home?” Ben looked at Richie curiously when he mentioned poetry.

“Let me see.” Ben took the note from Eddie. He wanted to see what type of poetry Richie wrote. It did not take him long to look back up at Richie with an annoyed look. Beverly looked at the note next and rolled her eyes.

“Really Richie? You did the whole roses are red, violets are blue cliché?” Beverly laughed before handing the note to Bill. Richie smirked in her direction before putting on his terrible British accent.

“Beverly darling you know I would pour my heart out for you if I could. Perhaps Ben can write the next one for me?”

“Beep beep Richie.” Ben blushed and refused to look Beverly in the eye. He played with his hands trying to calm down. Eddie took this as an opportunity to push the rose into Richie’s hand.

“If you want her to have it so bad, give it to her yourself.” Eddie wasn’t sure why he felt so angry about it. Richie always joked about Eddie’s mom. He would get made but nothing compared to this. He felt embarrassed that for a second he thought maybe someone would be interested in him. However, he would never admit that to any of his friends. The bell rang once more signaling for the kids to go to

class. Each loser said a quick goodbye before departing, leaving Eddie and Richie alone.

“Actually, it’s for you Eds. It smells great.” Richie was serious this time. He smiled shyly at the smaller boy who did not understand Richie’s intentions.

“Don’t call me that.” Eddie took the flower from Richie’s hand before walking away. He turned around right before walking into the classroom. Eddie pointed a finger at Richie before yelling. “Don’t ever try that shit again or I will skin you.” Eddie disappeared into the classroom leaving a laughing Richie staring back at him lovingly.

“Whatever you say Eddie Spaghetti.”

The next time Eddie gets a rose he is starting his first year of high school. All the losers were excited to start a new chapter in their lives. While it may be with the same kids as they grew up with, they still found excitement in this new school. Bev made a deal with her aunt to attend school in Derry but spend breaks in Oregon. This kept the losers club alive and well. Beverly was always smarter and wiser than the rest of them. She called it women’s intuition. The first few months of high schools had been hectic. Many of the losers still dealt with bullying and new hormonal changes. Eddie was no exception. He found that he was fighting with his mother almost every day. He began to refuse to take the pills she would always leave by his bed. Eddie would go over to Bill whenever he needed to talk about it or his issues with sexuality. Richie would always tease him about talking with Bill saying that Eddie was replacing him. He wasn’t really but Richie was beginning to change. Eddie felt that the teasing from Richie was more consistent and instead of only talking about kissing his mom he was talking about kissing Eddie too. Eddie should have been disgusted by that, but he wasn’t.

When February 14 rose its ugly head once more, Eddie did not think it would happen again. They began delivering the roses in fourth period, the class him and Richie shared. Eddie watched from the corner of his eye as Richie began to receive roses. When did he get so popular? It was one, no two, no three. Richie had three roses. Eddie felt his mood drop. He shrugged it off, he was probably jealous of Richie.

“What you got there Eds?” Richie motioned towards Eddie’s desk. He didn’t even realize that he received one as well. Eddie looked to see a red rose, like the one he received last year. A note was also attached. He looked at Richie who pretended to ignore Eddie and listen to the lecture. Eddie opened the note, not surprised by who sent it to him.

“Roses are Red
Violets are Blue
I like spaghetti
Let’s get it on”

Eddie snapped his head over to Richie who could barely hold in his laughter. If they were not in a classroom Eddie would already have Richie in a choke hold.

“That doesn’t even rhyme dumb ass.”

“It’s funny though. Get it, Eddie Spaghetti.” Eddie couldn’t help but blush at Richie’s comment. It was dumb and stupid. The poem did not even rhyme. However, what Richie was implying in the poem was what made him blush the most. Even though Richie liked to joke, it seemed like his teasing was getting more sexual as they got older. He was always crude but not directly at Eddie. It made Eddie feel weird about Richie. He didn’t dislike Richie but he also felt a pain in his heart whenever Richie flirted with a girl in front of Eddie. He would always blame it on jealousy. Eddie never dated or even kissed a girl. Richie already had his own rumors going around and roses to prove it. One student who was giving out the roses came back into the room and handed Richie one last rose.

“Sorry, forgot one.” Richie looked at Eddie with a smirk before reading the note. His smile quickly dropped as he read the words out loud.

“Fuck you.
-Eddie.”

Eddie was sixteen. He was slowly but surely understanding who he was. Those awkward feelings about changing in the locker room and not feeling attracted to girls became clear now. He was gay. Eddie told Beverly first before anyone. He knew she would be the one to empathize and understand him the most. She had helped him the last

few years with understanding why he was feeling the way he did. Eventually, he told Bill who did not seem to mind one bit. Eddie was glad that his best friend would support him no matter what. He didn't want to announce it to the whole group so he told the rest of the losers individually. Stan seemed to not care and Ben was eager to talk about poetry and music more with Eddie. Eddie figured Ben saw him as one less contender for Beverly to choose from. Mike patted him on the back, saying there was nothing wrong about it. Richie, however, was another story. Eddie never really had the conversation with him. He didn't know why but Richie made him nervous. Richie was a free spirit so Eddie knew he wouldn't be rude about it. Yet, Eddie worried that the teasing and touching would stop. He felt that if he let Richie know, he would lose the physical connection they shared.

Valentine's Day came around again and he felt nervous. His mom asked him if he was going to give a rose to any pretty girl. Eddie lied and said he had one in mind. Eddie knew how his mom felt about gay people. She thought it was a disease and seemed to be worried Eddie would catch it one day. Eddie even got a playboy magazine from Mike to hide under his bed so he could keep the façade going. College would be his escape. Eddie pondered on the idea of sending Richie a rose this year. He didn't want it to seem weird considering that he was out to his friends now. He could always make a funny one like he did last year. Richie's face was priceless when he opened that note.

"I'd like to send one please." Eddie gave the girl on the other side of the table a dollar before taking a pen and writing the note for Richie.

"Got someone special in mind?" The girl smiled at him from where she sat. He was surprised she would ask him a question. This year was the year that Eddie decided to grow out his hair a bit. The well-kept straight hair he once had was very curly and long now. His mother tried and tried again to get him to cut it but he liked it that way. It reminded him of his favorite Trashmouth. Eddie smiled back before letting out an awkward laugh.

"Yeah, it's just an ongoing joke though."

"Well, I am sure anyone is lucky to get a rose from you." The girl was so bold Eddie couldn't help but blush. He smiled and said his goodbyes before walking away from the table.

Even though he felt no attraction for the girl, it felt nice to be hit on by someone other than Richie.

“Are you cheating on me?” Eddie turned to see Richie leaning on one of the lockers. Unlike Eddie, Richie’s hair stayed the same length but his baby face from childhood was gone. Richie now had a sharp jawline that made him look handsome. His arms and legs grew longer making him a giant compared to Eddie. He would still wear his glasses but would also wear sunglasses as well. The way he leaned on the lockers made Eddie’s heart jump.

“No, she was just being nice. Were you there the whole time?” Richie smiled before putting his arm around Eddie’s shoulder.

“Of course Eds. You know how jealous I can be.” Eddie felt his pulse quicken at the word jealous. He knew Richie was only kidding but he couldn’t help but wish it wasn’t a joke. They continued to walk down the hallway, Richie’s arm still hung on Eddie. A girl stopped in front of them, blocking the hallway.

“Hey Richie, can I ask you something?” Eddie felt like he couldn’t breathe as he watched the girl look him up and down. Did she know Eddie was gay? Was he making it too obvious? Shit, someone could tell his mom and it would be all over. Eddie quickly moved away from Richie, trying to act normal. However, Richie looked at him confused and frustrated.

“Yeah sure, I’ll see you later Eds.” Eddie smiled and quickly left not bothering to correct Richie. Eddie was acting really weird. He hated it. He had developed a crush on Richie and accepted that in the beginning of the year but it only seemed to be getting worse. Eddie looked back to see the girl move closer to Richie. He turned away before entering the classroom. Just like the year before, a student came with a basket of roses. Eddie was ready to read another one of Richie’s stupid poems. The student began passing them out and Eddie noticed not one rose was coming his way. Panic consumed him as the last rose was given to a girl three seats back. Maybe they forgot, just like how they almost forgot Eddie’s rose for Richie last year. Maybe this was the year Richie decided to stop. Maybe Richie didn’t like the idea of giving roses to a fag. More negative thoughts continued to pop up in Eddie’s head. He didn’t even bother to pay attention to the

class because his mind wouldn't let him.

"Shit Richie is going to get my rose and read the note." Eddie covered his face in embarrassment as he thought of how the taller boy would make fun of him. Having a crush on Richie Tozier sucked ass.

The class ended and Eddie gathered his things. He felt left out without a rose to carry in his other hand. He let out a frustrated sigh before heading out into the hallway. He didn't expect to see Richie standing outside the door holding the rose Eddie got him. Eddie felt his face turn red as he tried to ignore Richie and walk down the hall.

"No so fast Eddie Spaghetti. We need to talk." Eddie felt his hand being held by Richie's. Eddie refused to look at Richie in the eye until he came to a stop outside of school. Eddie really didn't want to have this conversation. Richie would be all awkward letting Eddie down easy and Eddie would try and say it was all good even though it wasn't.

"Okay, can we get this over with." The negative thoughts began to creep back into his mind. Richie doesn't want to give roses to a fag. Eddie is a fag. Richie hates it. He hates him.

"I wanted to give you this in person." All thoughts stopped as Richie handed him a rose. Eddie looked up at Richie in shock. Richie didn't forget. Richie didn't hate him. Eddie took the rose from Richie's hand, smelling the familiar aroma. It was stronger than the roses before. Eddie opened the note.

"Roses are Red
Violets Are Blue
You have stolen my heart
Can I steal yours too?"

"This isn't funny Richie." Eddie's heart swelled at the note in front of him. He wanted to believe the words but was scared. This could be another joke.

"It's not a joke this time Eds." Richie's nerves began to show and he clung to the other rose in his hand. It was a strong but careful grip so Eddie's flower would not fall apart. Eddie felt overjoyed by Richie's words. Could he like Eddie back? Eddie took Richie's hand and lead

him to a nearby tree. He took a risk and leaned up to kiss Richie. It was a short kiss, enough to get the point across. When Eddie opened his eyes, he was welcomed by a smiling Richie.

“You can have it.” Eddie looked down at the grass. He couldn’t believe what he just did and said. This was something so new but it felt like it was meant to be. No girl or anyone could make him feel the way that Richie made him feel.

“Good and I am not letting anyone else have it. Now let’s get some milkshakes to celebrate.” Richie wrapped his arm around Eddie and lead the boy to their bikes. Eddie felt excited. Maybe college would not be the only new beginning to look forward to. As they mounted their bikes, Eddie thought back to his rose that he gave Richie.

“Thank you for helping me be me. You are my one and only Trashmouth.”

-Eddie

Junior year came with a lot of firsts. First relationship, first fight, first makeout, and first love. Eddie felt like he had been preparing his whole life to have a love like this. Nothing really changed between them. They still bickered over stupid things and made fun of each other endlessly. However, their love for each other deepened. It is so easy to fall in love with your best friend. Richie and Eddie kept their relationship a secret from everyone except their friends. It was easy to forget the problem inching closer towards them, the future. Many of the losers were thinking about colleges and what to apply to. Unfortunately, all the schools chosen were in different states. Eddie knew his mother wanted him to go to a school closest to her. He nodded his head anytime she talked about it, pretending that was the plan. They still had a year. Nothing was set in stone yet. Eddie preferred to focus on his relationship with Richie and spend as much time with him as possible. While they threw the phrase I love you at each other when they were kids, they hadn’t said it once since they started dating. The words had a deeper meaning now.

Valentine’s day was all about saying I love you. The words were all over the place. They were coming out of people’s mouths and displayed all over the bulletin boards in decorations. Eddie felt like this would be a good day to say it. He truly loved Richie. Once again, the familiar basket of flowers appeared in his classroom. He waited

patiently to receive his. Finally, the rose was handed to him and he didn't wait to read it.

"Roses are Red
Violets are blue
I can't help it Eds
I have fallen in love with you"
-Your mother is my true love though ;)

Instead of being angry at the last statement Eddie was laughing. He covered his mouth in shock. Everything felt like a dream. Richie felt like a dream. A dream he never thought he deserved. Instead of waiting for class to be over, Eddie excused himself and ran through the hallway. He needed to see Richie, he needed to kiss Richie. Eddie slowed down when he reached the end of the hallway. Richie was there smiling as if he had won the lottery. In his hand were Eddie's note and flower. They didn't say anything before they brought their lips together. The kiss was long and sweet. All their emotions and feelings for each other were expressed through their lips. Eddie's note fell to the ground as Richie held him close. The note opened up revealing Eddie's confession.

"I may not be a poet, heck, you still use roses are red poems.
All I need to say is this. I am hopelessly and forever in love with you
Richie Tozier."

Senior year had been the worst year of Eddie's life. Someone had caught Richie and Eddie kissing behind the bleachers and all hell broke loose. Peers began bullying and harassing Eddie. His friends tried to defend him and protect him but it didn't help much. Everyone was waiting on their letters back from college. Eddie had only applied to schools near Derry while Richie was applying to schools in California. This created many fights between them. They had a big one the night before Valentine's Day. Eddie felt like he was going to lose Richie and that he would be forgotten. Ugly words were exchanged that made Eddie run out the door with tears in his eyes. He was worried about today knowing that his tradition with Richie may never continue. He got ready for school and looked for the roses he kept over the years. Eddie dried the flowers and pressed them so he could keep them. Yet, no matter where he looked he couldn't find them. Then a sudden realization hit him like a bucket of cold water.

He slowly walked down the stairs to see the roses and notes he kept for years laying on the dinner table. His mother sat across from them with a look of disgust. Eddie felt like he could die right there. Not even a leper could scare him as much as this moment. He prayed it would never come.

“What the hell are these?” The words felt like poison dripping in his ears. Eddie had no idea of how to get out of this. This would end everything.

“It’s just jokes Mama.” Eddie barely got the words out as he gripped the staircase. His knuckles turned white.

“You have a disease, Eddie. I need to take you to the doctor now. We need to take you to a doctor far away from this boy.”

“NO.” Eddie screamed at his mother. She was going to lock him up. He would have to take more pills. He couldn’t handle any more pills.

“No?” How dare you talk back to me young man. After everything I have done for you.”

“What have you done for me? All you have done is damaged me with those fucking pills. I do not have a disease I never have.” Eddie approached the dinner table. He did his best to look strong but he felt himself panicking inside. He didn’t know how this would end. He worried he would never see his friends again.

“You are a fag Eddie. You need to be healed. They have facilities in the mountains for people like you.” People like you. The words felt heavy in Eddie’s chest. It was as if any love she felt for him died.

“I love him mom and you can’t stop me from feeling this way. Nobody can.”

“Fine. If that’s how you want to be.” Eddie watched as she gathered up the roses. A hard crunch made his heart split open.

“No please, don’t.” Eddie was crying now as he watched his mother begin to crush the roses Richie gave him over the years. She tore up the notes that had given him so much joy and happiness.

"I want you gone in a week. I can't stand to look at you." Eddie felt like he couldn't move as he watched the beloved rose petals crumble into pieces. His mother gathered her purse and keys before leaving the house. Eddie felt his breathing begin to stop. He looked around frantically for his inhaler. He grabbed his backpack. His hands were shaking, it took him a few moments before he could find it and bring it to his mouth. After a few moments, his breathing began ease. He had to get out of here. Eddie went upstairs and packed a bag with all his clothes he knew he would have to pick up the rest of his things later. Eddie just needed to get out.

Eddie approached Bill's door and hoped to god Bill would be the one to answer the door. For once today he was in luck. Bill emerged from the other side of the door.

"E-eddie w-w-what happened?" Eddie couldn't stop the tears as he explained to Bill what happened. Bill let him inside and told his parents as well. Eddie was worried about what they would say but was happily surprised when they offered Eddie to live with them until he left for college. Eddie felt more welcomed than he ever did with his mother. They all agreed that Eddie should stay home instead of going to school. Eddie thought of Richie and how it would seem like he ditched so Eddie wouldn't have to face him. Bill said he would explain what happened and that Eddie needed to rest. He didn't realize how tired he would get from crying so much. Before he knew it, he was passed out in Bill's bed hoping to escape the nightmare he was experiencing.

Eddie woke up from the sound of a knock on the door. He looked at the clock to see it was only half past noon. Before he could say anything, a warm familiar voice took over his ears.

"Hey Eds, can I come in?"

"Yeah." The word came out groggy from how tired he was. Richie walked in the room. He looked warm in a wool sweater that complimented the color of his eyes. Eddie thought he looked handsome and it warmed his broken heart.

"I heard what happened. Everyone else is downstairs. They didn't want to leave you." At his words Eddie began to cry again. Richie ran over to Eddie and pulled him into a hug. Eddie cried louder as he held Richie tight.

“She said she was going to send me to one of those mental hospitals. They would have killed me up there. She also told me to get out. How am I supposed to support myself through college now? I don’t have a home to come back to.” Eddie dug his face deeper into Richie’s sweater. Richie stroked Eddie’s hair, doing his best to calm Eddie down.

“I’m so sorry Eddie. She had no right to say that.” They stayed silent for a minute to let Eddie calm down. “She and I were never going to work anyway.” Eddie couldn’t help but laugh at Richie’s stupid joke. He wiped his eyes before smiling up at Richie.

“You are so dumb sometimes.”

“Dumb but attractive. You know you love me.” Eddie smiled before looking down at his hands.

“I am sorry about the argument yesterday. I said some things I didn’t really mean.”

“Hey, don’t worry about it. I said some stupid shit too. We will probably have more of those in the future but that still won’t stop me from loving you.” Richie reached for Eddie’s check and pinched it. The smaller boy swatted Richie’s hand away making him laugh in return.

“I don’t know what I am going to do Richie.”

“Well, you can start with accepting my rose.” Eddie looked up to see a rose in Richie’s hand. It was not a fresh rose like the others. It looked as if it was made of metal. The red paint on the petals shined when they hit the sun. Next to it was a note much larger than the ones in the past.

“This is beautiful. I didn’t get-“

“It’s okay just open it.” Eddie did as he was told. However, there was no cheesy poem like before. Instead laid a plane ticket to California that was dated near the end of the summer. Eddie looked up at Richie confused. Why would he give him a plane ticket if there wasn’t a place to go? Richie motioned to him to read more. Eddie looked

through the note to find an acceptance letter from UCLA with his name on it.

“Is this some kind of joke?”

“Okay, so I may have stolen a copy of your college essay and sent it to UCLA in hopes that you would be accepted and come with me. I know it’s crazy and I know what you are thinking but I can’t live without you, Eddie.” Eddie was shocked at the papers in front of him. He still couldn’t understand how this all came to be.

“But the money?”

“I explained your situation in a letter and they are willing to give you a scholarship. We can do this, you and me. We can forget this prejudice town and move to a place that is more open and diverse. We may find friends who are in the situation we are in right now. I know you have gone through a lot to be with me and I want us to be able to feel like we don’t always have to hide all the time. I love you Eddie and I want to be with you for the rest of our lives.” Richie held Eddie’s hands with hope in his eyes. This seemed like one of Eddie’s dreams. Was he dreaming?

“Richie, I’m scared.” Eddie wanted this more than anything but this would mean he would have to give up his life in Derry. Even though the town was small he loved it. It had its own special charm without the whole missing children thing. “What about IT? We made that pact.”

“If IT does come back we will too but that is years from now. We need to live and I don’t want to live without you.”

“I don’t want to live without you either.” Richie began to smile as he saw Eddie’s mood switch.

“So, is that a yes?”

“It’s a hell yes.”